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giant city

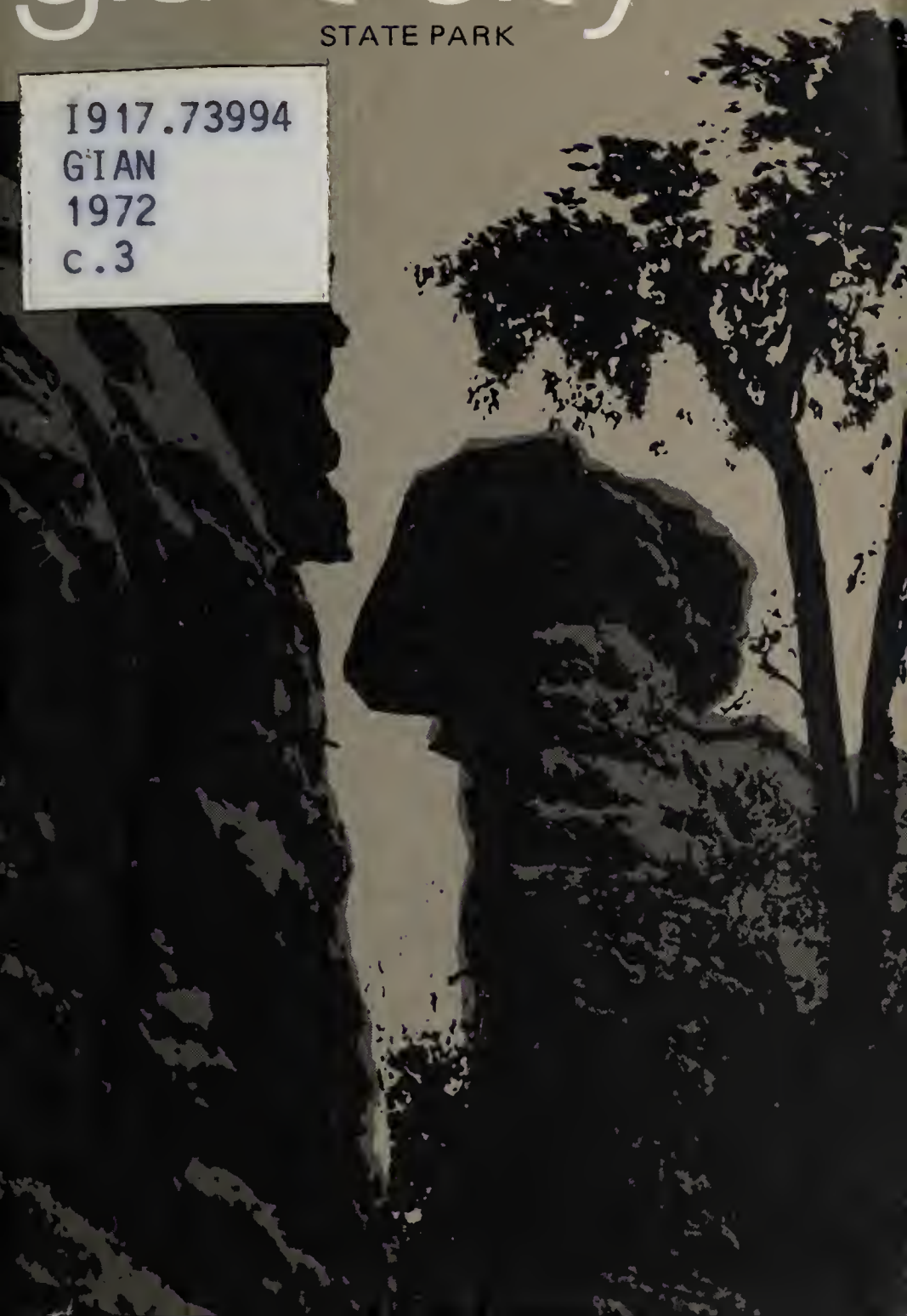
STATE PARK

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THE PARK

As intriguing as its name is Giant City State Park with its Giant City section of "streets" and peculiar stone formations, the great beauty of large trees and a wealth of plant and animal life. In 1927, the state acquired 1,162 acres in Jackson and Union counties near Makanda, 12 miles south of Carbondale off U.S. 51. More recent land acquisitions have increased the acreage to 2,947.

HISTORY

Along with Dixon Springs and Ferne Clyffe state parks, Giant City State Park is part of the Illinois extension of the Little Ozark Mountains. Each of these parks shows a particular aspect of this extension which is the only American mountain range running east and west. A group of huge blocks of sandstone, to which the name "Giant City" has been applied, gives the park its name.

Once Lowland Plain: The park is situated in a belt of hills that cross the narrow part of Southern Illinois. Ages ago this area was a lowland plain that slowly emerged from a sea which at that time formed the northern edge of the present Gulf of Mexico.

As the region gradually rose, the stream which flowed over it cut their valleys deeper and deeper. Now only isolated ridges and knobs are left. Wherever the rocks are hard and resistant, they stand as steep walls along the valleys; wherever they are soft, they have worn down to gentle slopes. All of this produces an area suggestive of ancient worn mountains. Some of the most striking examples of stream erosion in hard rock are found in the park.

The bedrock belongs to the Pennsylvania system and is generally exposed or thinly covered along the walls and in the side-gullies of the streams. This is known as "Coal Measures" because all of the coal beds in the Central and Appalachian states occur in the system.

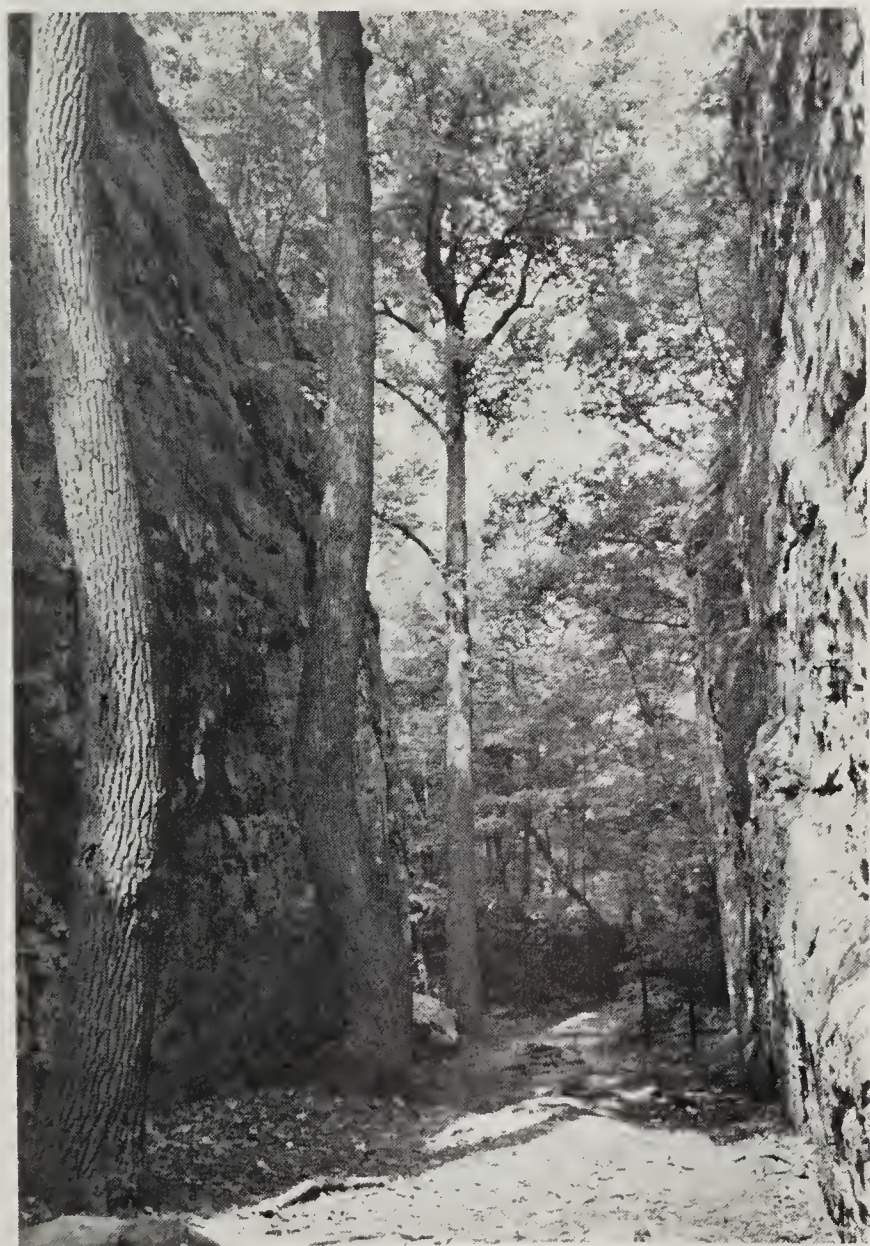
The rock that attracts the most attention is a massive sandstone formation that composes the upper part of the hills and forms precipitous bluffs wherever conditions are favorable. The huge blocks of rock that form the "Giant City" section are masses of this sandstone formation which have become separated from the adjacent parent ledge.

This separation has occurred when a stream cut through the massive sandstone into a softer rock such as shale and the soft rock is removed faster than the hard rock, gradually undercutting the latter until eventually masses are broken off. As a result of the numerous up-and-down movements of the surface of earth in Southern Illinois, the hard rocks have been cracked or jointed in many directions.

The sandstone at Giant City is jointed along two general directions and the resulting blocks settle down readily wherever the support provided by the shale below them is reduced. Inasmuch as the shale is soft and slithery when wet, the joint-blocks gradually slide down the shale slopes and thus move away from the parent ledge. One of the most interesting natural rock formations from this process is The Devil's Stand-Table (cover) just west of the Visitor's Center.

Colored Paintings: Where exposed to weathering, the sandstone has been stained by minerals, carried by water seepage and is in various shades of red, brown and yellow, while the unweathered stone shows white or light buff.

Giant City State Park lies just outside the glaciated area of Illinois. Perhaps the park was affected by the proximity of the glacier and its melting waters, but the only visible effect is the soil, called loess, which is made up of rock flour



produced by the grinding action of the glacier and deposited by the wind everywhere on the uplands.

Home of Primitive Man: A bizarre stone feature of the park is man-made. Called the "Stone Fort," it is the work of ancient man who made this region his home. Located at the top of an 80-foot sandstone cliff, the fort is a great wall of loose stone that partially encloses several acres. This is one of the best examples of seven of these forts located throughout Southern Illinois.

For years these structures were thought to have been built for defensive purposes. Today, it is common belief that they were buffalo traps, used to corral the animals and then stampede them over the high cliffs.

Other indications of the presence of prehistoric man are found in rock shelters, whose roofs are presumably smoke-stained from camp fires. During the Civil War, these same shelters were used by deserters from both armies. Other dens among the rock are dark crevices used as a home for many bats, some of which winter here.

THE NATURAL SCENE

The whole area is a paradise for the outdoor lover. A large part of this end of the state forms the Shawnee National Forest with its many scenic locations. The natural interests of Giant City are prolific in this area due to the overlapping of northern and southern species of plant and animal life. Many of the birds are southern as the mockingbird, but one also finds crows belonging to both the north and south. In the evening there are the eerie calls of the whippoorwill and his southern cousin, the chuck-will's-widow.

In the spring the woods are tinted with redbud, shad bush, wahoo, Hercules'-club and flowering dogwood; throughout the year they are graced with the presence of the tuliptree, red maple, sweet gum, tupelo, cucumber and winged elm. Red Cedar and southern yellow pine are well represented also in the more than 75 different trees found in the park. Great peach and apple orchards, visible from the park area, are exquisite when in bloom.

There are over 800 different ferns and flowering plants in the park. Again, in the spring the ground is literally carpeted with trillium, blood-root, spring beauty, sweet william, Dutchman's-breeches, lady's slipper, jack-in-the-pulpit, shoot-

ing star and many other wild flowers. May is the peak flowering month when about 170 different types may be found.

UNIQUE FEATURE

The new 100,000-gallon spherical water tank in Giant City State Park won the "Steel Tank of the Year" award in 1972 when it was termed "conceived in a daring artistic design."

The tank is 82 feet high, suspended at the top between three tall tubular columns which neatly conceal the inlet and drawoff piping. An unusual feature is the circular observation platform, 50 feet off the ground, which is reached by a spiral steel staircase.



FACILITIES

Visitor's Center: Upon entering the park, most visitors stop here where they find nearly concealed parking areas in the woods. A wood-chip trail winds from the parking stalls beneath a pleasant stand of oaks and hickories. Park Interpreters are on duty from nine to five, Monday through Saturday, one to five on Sunday. They explain various exhibits at the center and also present programs on the lawn at the lodge at dusk on Friday and Saturday evenings from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

The Robinson log cabin has been reconstructed in this area and will depict life as it was in the area around 1880. Other relics of early area settlers may be seen. An interesting tree-finder wheel enables one to sight a numbered tree in the area and then learn the tree and some of its uses by reading from the wheel.

Between the log cabin and the Visitor's Center, a picturesque boulder-bordered pond has been stocked with fish. The water for the pool is air-cooled as it flows over a large boulder and drops into the pool, thus adding more oxygen to the water.

Trails: The park interpreters lead guided trips periodically along Towhee, Trillium, Giant City, Stonefort and Indian Creek Shelter trails. These, as well as Sassafras and Devil's Stand-table trails, can be hiked without the interpreters, as there are signposts along each to identify various features.

An extensive horse riding trail weaves through the park. Although horses are not provided, a Class "A" camping area for horses is available at the south end of the park.

Camping: Along with the campground mentioned above, there is another Class "A" campground complete with electricity, sanitary station and a modern utility building including showers and flush toilets for tent and trailer camping. A class "B" campground is used for youth group camping. Permits must be secured from the Park Ranger.

Picnicking: Several native stone shelters in the park provide for group picnicking, while individual picnic tables are scattered throughout the park. Pure water, picnic tables and fireplaces are provided. No cooking may be done except on park or camp stoves. Nearby to most picnic areas are playgrounds for smaller children.

Airstrip: There is a 2,400-foot long grass airstrip for visitors.

Fishing: The Department of Conservation has a land-use lease from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for an area with frontage on Little Grassy Lake, adjacent to Giant City. It provides boat fishing, boat rental and launching ramps. Ten horsepower motors are allowed. Picnicking and recreational areas are plentiful, tent and trailer camping are available. Regulations governing the use of boats can be obtained from Refuge Manager, Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, Marion, Illinois.



THE LODGE

At the southernmost tip of the park, Giant City State Park lodge, massive in appearance and built of multi-hued stone enhanced by log balconies, is in perfect keeping with the spirit of the park in its construction and appointments. The spacious lounge, colorfully decorated in Indian motif, the large dining room, banquet hall and snack bar truly represent the hospitality for which Southern Illinois is famous. There are a dozen cabins nearby that are modern in every respect, yet blend with the rustic simplicity and natural beauty of the park. The lodge and cabins are open from March until November each year, are completely air-conditioned and have televisions. Many indoor and outdoor activities are available in the area.

Visible from the lodge and particularly impressive when lighted at night is the Alto Pass Cross on the top of Bald Knob Mountain.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION . . .

Admittance will not be granted groups of 25 or more persons to any state park or conservation area unless permission from the park ranger has been secured to use the facilities. It is also required that groups of minors have adequate supervision and that at least one responsible adult accompany each group not exceeding 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Numerous State Park and Memorials are within easy access to every part of the state. Lodges, cabins and dining rooms are important features of Illinois Beach, Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, White Pines Forest and Giant City. Reservations for lodging should be made with lodge managers.

All state parks are open the year round, except when weather conditions necessitate the closing of park roads during freezing and thawing periods when access to park facilities is by foot traffic only.

For further information concerning Illinois State Parks and Memorials write to the Division of Education, Department of Conservation, State Office Building, Springfield, 62706.



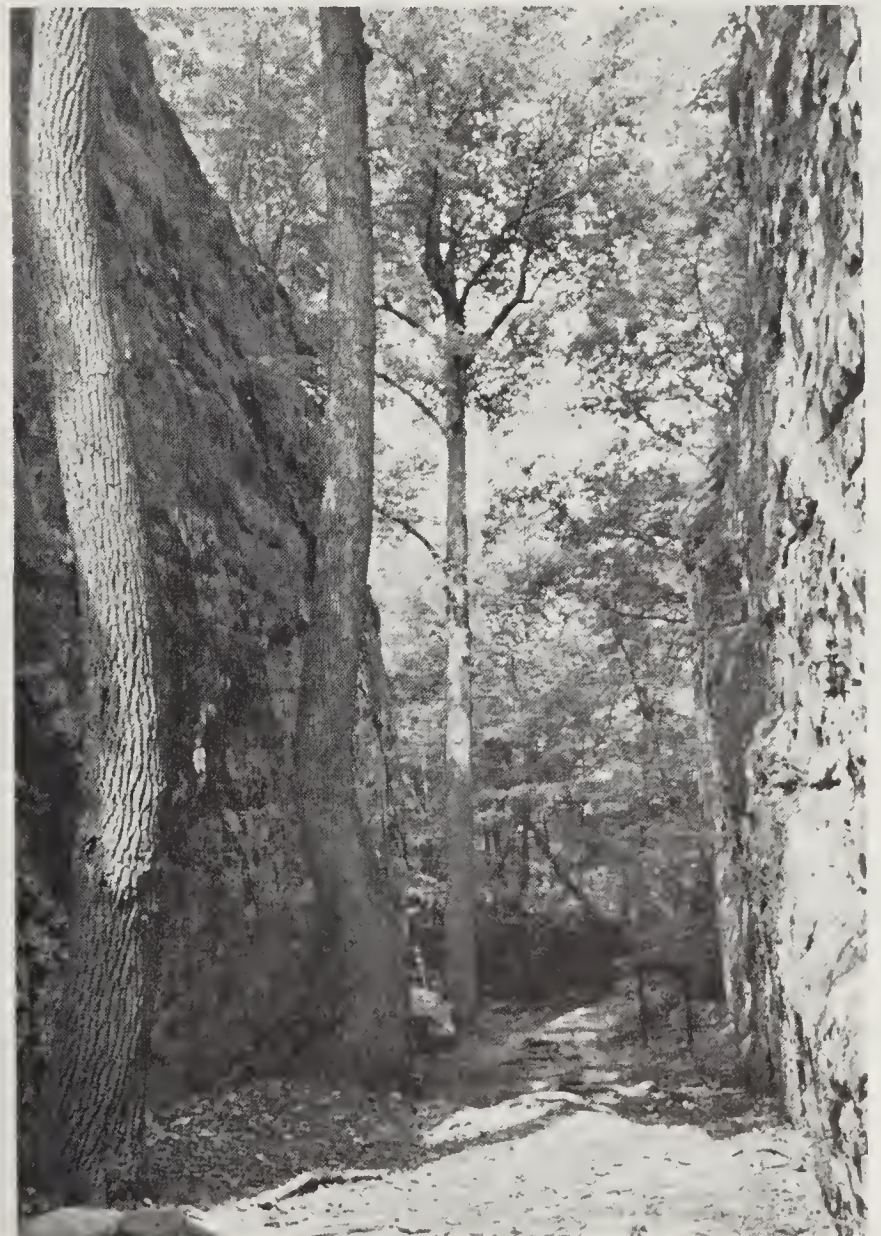
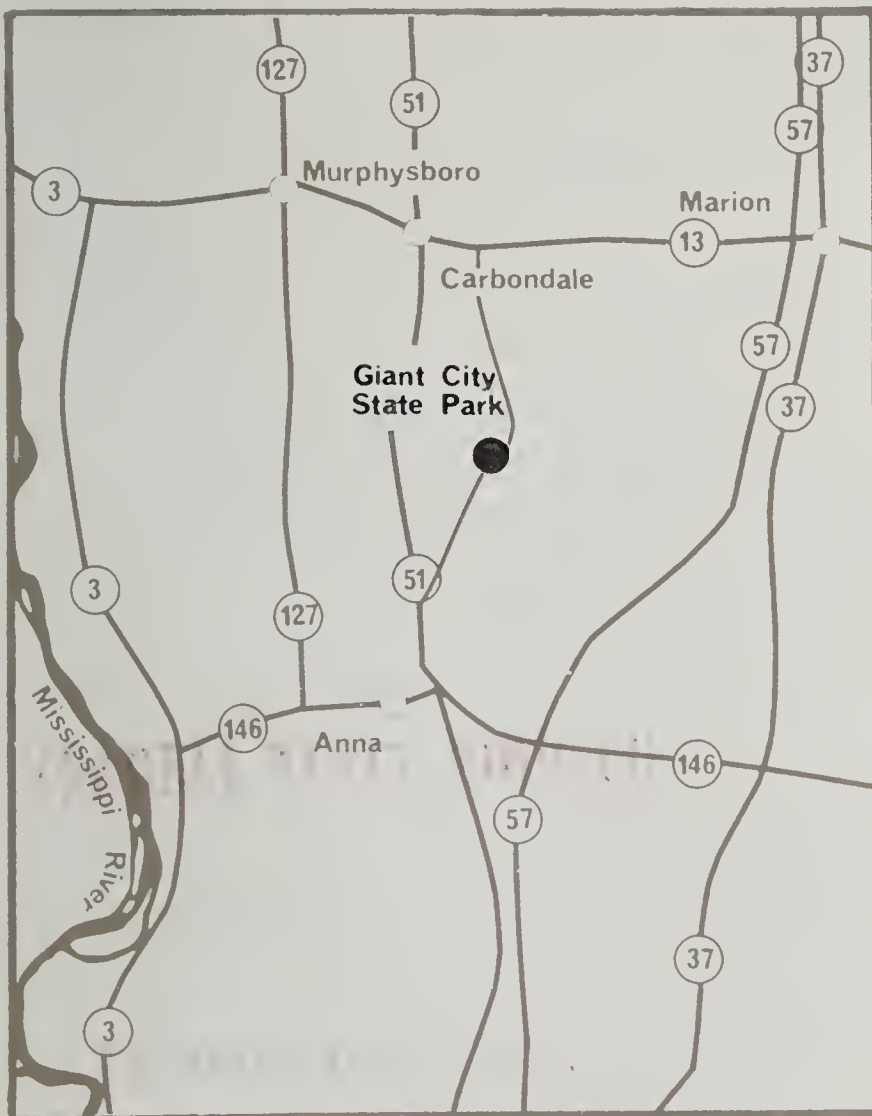
Park Map

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